

KOUM ABENAN ANNE YEBOUA

**PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES OF TOURISTS
TOWARDS ECOTOURISM IN THE RIA FORMOSA
NATURAL PARK (FARO)**



UNIVERSITY OF ALGARVE

FACULTY OF ECONOMICS

2022

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NATURAL PARK (FARO)**

Masters in management (Tourism management)

Dissertation made under the supervision of:
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UNIVERSITY OF ALGARVE

FACULTY OF ECONOMICS

2022

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(FARO)**

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost, I would like to thank God the Almighty for his showers of blessing throughout my research work. I would like to express my deep and sincere gratitude to my research supervisor Professor Lara Noronha Ferreira for giving me the opportunity to be supervised under her care by providing invaluable guidance throughout this research. She taught me the methodology to carry out the research and to present the research works as clearly as possible. It was a great privilege and honour to work under her guidance.

I would also like to thank all my friends that help me with the distribution of my survey online, the coding of my work and also the completion of my works.

Finally, am grateful to my parents for their love, prayers, caring, support and sacrifices for my education and preparing me for the future

Abstract

Ecotourism has become one of the fastest growing kinds of tourism. It is defined as a responsible travel to natural areas that preserves environment, maintain the welfare of local people, and involves education and interpretation. Ecotourism has become a popular choice for tourists because of its concept of nature preservation and conservation. To better attract the attention of tourist towards ecotourism is very important to monitor their overall behavior. Therefore, the general objective of this study is to understand tourists' perceptions and attitudes towards ecotourism in the Ria Formosa Natural Park. Data was collected online with a total of 150 responses received. Data obtained from the field were analyzed using Statistical Product and Service Solution (SPSS version 26). Regarding the respondents' characteristics, 41.3% are British, 58.7% are males, 43.6% are highly educated. From the result obtained with the sample, respondents see the park as one of the top tourist sites in Portugal 85%. They have a very low awareness of what fully ecotourism is about with 35.3% disagreement, the park is perceived to be safe place with 39.6% agreement, quietness of the surrounding is crucial in their desire to use the services of the tourist center 42.4% agreement. Finally, a clean environment is necessary to enhance their satisfaction 41% agreement. Moreover, the study shows that respondent degree of knowledge, factors that drive satisfaction, perceptions of tourists, environment concerns and nationality have a significant relationship with respondent overall satisfaction with the park. This research contributes to a better understand of tourist perceptions and attitudes towards ecotourism and can therefore be used by park managers to attract visitors to ecotourism through ecotourism education and awareness programs.

Keywords: Attitudes, Knowledge, Ecotourism, Ria Formosa Natural Park, Perception, Satisfaction

Resumo

O ecoturismo tornou-se um dos sectores do turismo com crescimento mais rápido e pode ser definido como uma viagem responsável para áreas naturais com a preocupação de preservar o ambiente, manter o bem-estar da população local, e envolver os turistas na educação e interpretação. Um dos seus principais objetivos consiste em levar os turistas a estabelecerem uma conexão entre a preservação e a sustentabilidade. Para melhor atrair a atenção dos turistas para o ecoturismo é muito importante monitorizar o seu comportamento e perceber quais os fatores que condicionam a sua satisfação. Neste sentido, o objetivo geral deste trabalho é compreender as perceções e atitudes dos turistas em relação ao ecoturismo no Parque Natural da Ria Formosa, em Faro.

Foi utilizada uma amostra não aleatória de turistas que tenham visitado o Parque Natural da Ria Formosa, em Faro. Os dados foram recolhidos num formato de inquirição online, entre julho e outubro de 2021. A ligação para o questionário foi partilhada por correio eletrónico e nas redes sociais. O questionário era composto por 21 perguntas divididas em duas secções: a primeira secção centrou-se no conhecimento dos turistas sobre turismo ecológico, satisfação dos turistas, percepção dos inquiridos em relação ao ecoturismo e nas suas preocupações ambientais. A parte seguinte do questionário centrou-se nos dados demográficos.

Foi realizada uma análise descritiva dos dados realizada uma análise inferencial, usando testes paramétricos e não paramétricos.

No total, foram recebidas 150 respostas. Relativamente às características dos inquiridos, 41,3% são britânicos. A maioria dos turistas são do sexo masculino, casados e com um nível educacional elevado. A idade média dos inquiridos que participaram no estudo foi de 37,14 anos, variando entre 18 e 67 anos. A principal razão para os inquiridos visitarem o Parque Natural da Ria Formosa é considerarem o Parque Natural da Ria Formosa como um local de observação de nascimentos de aves; em segundo lugar, indicaram o facto de poderem dar um passeio pela Natureza. Para além disso, os inquiridos veem o Parque Natural da Ria Formosa como um dos locais turísticos de topo em Portugal. Por outro lado, os inquiridos veem o ecoturismo mais como um fator económico para proporcionar uma oportunidade de realização de receitas (82,9%), do que apenas como um lugar natural para se ligar à natureza (17,1%).

Quanto ao grau de conhecimento dos inquiridos, os resultados mostram que os inquiridos têm um conhecimento muito baixo sobre o que é o ecoturismo (35,3%). Por outro lado, 46,6% dos inquiridos indicaram que realizam atividades ligadas ao ecoturismo, tendo em conta o que consideram ser ecoturismo. Os inquiridos também referiram que consideram que o

ecoturismo visa preservar a vida selvagem. Este estudo demonstrou que, na maioria das vezes, os turistas se sentiam atraídos pelo que existia no Parque Natural da Ria Formosa, e não por questões relacionadas com a alimentação e fatores económicos. Os resultados também revelaram que os turistas desfrutaram da natureza do Parque Natural da Ria Formosa e que se sentem seguros. A tranquilidade da envolvência desempenha um papel importante no seu desejo de utilizar os serviços do Parque Natural da Ria Formosa, a variedade de animais existentes é crucial para determinar se visitariam o local. As preocupações ambientais dos inquiridos mostram que estão muito preocupados com o facto de ser necessário um ambiente limpo para aumentar a satisfação e que se o ambiente não for suficientemente agradável, então isso poderá colocar em causa a satisfação. Assim, quando questionados sobre as preocupações ambientais e sobre o que consideram que deve ser uma preocupação importante da gestão do Parque Natural da Ria Formosa, os turistas sugerem que o saneamento é a questão mais ambientalmente preocupante que os turistas enfrentam. Os respondentes listaram, entre outros, o lixo ambiental proveniente de excrementos de animais, resíduos plásticos e instalações sanitárias inadequadas, como sendo as suas preocupações ambientais.

Além disso, o estudo mostra que o grau de conhecimento dos inquiridos, os fatores que impulsionam a satisfação, a perceção do turista, as preocupações ambientais e a nacionalidade têm uma relação significativa com a satisfação dos inquiridos com o Parque Natural da Ria Formosa. Além disso, existe uma relação significativa entre a perceção dos inquiridos e o seu desejo de visitar o Parque Natural da Ria Formosa. O nível educacional e a idade têm uma forte relação positiva com a opinião dos inquiridos sobre o Parque Natural da Ria Formosa, enquanto que o género não está relacionado com a satisfação com o Parque Natural da Ria Formosa. É ainda de referir que a satisfação, perceção em relação ao Parque Natural da Ria Formosa, as preocupações ambientais dependem significativamente do grau de conhecimento que os inquiridos têm em relação ao Parque Natural da Ria Formosa. Foi também encontrada uma correlação entre a nacionalidade e a satisfação dos inquiridos em relação ao Parque Natural da Ria Formosa; por conseguinte, deve ser dada especial atenção ao mercado britânico.

Este estudo fornece informações úteis para a gestão e contribui para o desenvolvimento do ecoturismo em mercados emergentes. Sendo os britânicos a nacionalidade que mais visita o Parque, seguidos dos franceses e holandeses, podemos concluir que os britânicos procuram mais do que o turismo tradicional (sol e praia). A Ria Formosa possui um clima atrativo com temperaturas amenas durante todo o ano, o que é uma vantagem para atrair turistas internacionais de todo o mundo. Portanto, os esforços de divulgação e campanhas de marketing poderiam ser direcionados para esses países. Os resultados demonstram que talvez possa ser

mais benéfico promover o Parque Natural da Ria Formosa como destino de observação de aves no mercado britânico do que noutros países, uma vez que os britânicos já são a principal nacionalidade dos turistas no Algarve.

Esta investigação contribui para uma melhor compreensão da perceção e atitudes turísticas em relação ao ecoturismo e pode, portanto, ser utilizada pelos gestores de parques para atrair visitantes através de programas de educação e sensibilização sobre o ecoturismo. Adicionalmente, as conclusões do estudo aconselham os profissionais de marketing a desenvolverem materiais que enfatizem a perspetiva futura do ecoturismo e imagens de ecodestinos, para promoverem o ecoturismo. Este estudo também recomenda que as organizações públicas devem criar uma maior consciência da importância da proteção ambiental através da educação, e meios de comunicação social.

Palavras-chave: atitudes, conhecimento, ecoturismo, Parque Natural da Ria Formosa, perceção, satisfação.

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ABBREVIATION LIST

CICES: Common International Classification of Ecosystem services

DFID: Department for International Development

EEA: European Environment Agency

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

IC: International Conference

IPBES: Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity Ecosystem Services

MEA: Millennium Eco-system Assessment

NGOs: nongovernmental organisations

RFNP: Ria Formosa Natural Park

TIES: International Ecotourism Society

TSC: Tourism Supply Chain

UNSGAN: UN Sub Global Assessment Net

UNWTO: World Tourism Organization

USAID: United States Agency for International Development

WES: World Economic Summit

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Organizational researchers have asserted that the role tourism plays in the development of every country cannot be overemphasized (Scheyvens and Momsen, 2008). This is basically due to the fact that tourists are mostly on the go and contribute immensely to the economic development of every country across the globe through diverse means. This has particularly influenced the ways several countries across the world have developed and fashioned themselves to become more economically welcome. This drive by countries has been influenced by the significant returns that firms have experienced. For instance, the tourism area represents 11 % of the worldwide Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 8 % of worldwide employment (Zsarnoczky et al., 2016). There has been an expansion in global tourism activities since the 1960s which determines economic development. Evaluations of 113.9 million global tourists were recorded worldwide in 1965 with this figure expanding to 1.4 billion in 2018(WTO, 2019).

According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), *“Tourism is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which involves the movement of individuals to nations or places outside their typical climate for business or delight purposes”*. These individuals are called guests (which might be either tourists or travelers; occupants or non-inhabitants) and a portion of their activities imply tourism expenditure" (Cherifi et al, 2014). According to Tourism notes, tourism incorporates various classifications (International or domestic tourism) with various structures, for example, Adventure Tourism, Atomic Tourism, Bicycle Tours, Beach Tourism, Cultural Tourism, Ecotourism, Geotourism, Industrial Tourism, Medical Tourism, Religious Tourism, Rural Tourism, Sex Tourism, Space Tourism, Sports Tourism, Sustainable Tourism, Virtual Tourism, War Téourism and Wildlife Tourism

Forbes (2020) lists the Algarve Region of Portugal as one of the significant tourist destinations in Europe where the concept of ecotourism is being developed. Eco-tourism contributes about 25% of the worldwide market (Singh, 2003) and is a vehicle for engaging local communities to battle against destitution, and accomplish sustainable development (Elangovan, 2016). In recent years, there has been critical consideration towards the concept of environmental and sustainable tourism (Goodwin, 2009) and furthermore an expansion in public awareness concerning the severity of environmental issues related with tourism (Honey, 2008). Eco-

tourism has the potential to contribute significantly to sustainable development especially in regions where delicate or indispensable environments draw in tourism use (Powell and Ham, 2008) for example, the Ria Formosa. Ecotourism in the Ria Formosa fosters knowledge acquisition, appreciating, and enjoying natural settings and diverse wildlife in the biological system and learning the way of life and history gave by the environmental settings, all of which can contribute to ecological preservation (Fennell, 2001; Lee, 2007).

The Ria Formosa Natural Park in the Algarve Region has been referred to as one of the natural parks with outstanding topographies, vegetations, and fauna in Europe.¹. It is additionally a home to an extraordinary variety of feathered creature species among others (Marcelo & Cancela da Fonseca, 1998). This variety both in fauna and flora has extended the picture of the area to the international world, as a destination that offers ecotourism services. For instance, the development of an exceptional kind of ecological tourism, birdwatching, pulls in birdwatchers from over the globe (Istomina et al., 2016). This subsequently proposes that ecotourism activities inside the Ria Formosa Natural Park are expanding (Turismo do Algarve, 2012). Ecotourism in the Ria Formosa can be classified in the new forms of tourism. Ecotourism has been developed within the concept of environmental development somewhere in the range of 1970s and 1980s (Honey, 2009). It has been defined as responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the wellbeing of the local people and involves interpretation and education (TIES, 2016). Its main purpose comprises of educating the traveler on the associated connection between preservation, sustainability, and the genuine of nearby networks and increasing the mindfulness tourists have about the social conditions surrounding a travel destination (TIES, 2016).

On the other hand, searches in Web of Science conducted in 2020 on ecotourism about the perceptions and satisfactions of tourists in the Ria Formosa Natural Park returned just one outcome. This demonstrates that research regarding tourists' perceptions and satisfaction in the ecotourism area inside the Ria Formosa Natural Part is needed. This dearth of information does not support effective management options. It is thus important to research into this direction to fill this knowledge gap.

1

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The struggle in the development of ecotourism within countries has always been a critical issue. This has raised several interests in both research and practise concerning what model countries would employ to ensure that the right model will be used to ensure that they achieve the desired results. In becoming a great site for tourism, there is the need for the Ria Formosa Natural Park to develop a well thought and designed plan, development, and activity of low-sway offices. This is very important due to the fact that this will enable the park managers develop a tool out of having identified the key factors that influence the satisfaction of the tourists. This would mean that it would then be quite easier to develop a model which will then be used as a marketing tool for improving the degree of patronage of the services. Due to the unstable nature of customers, it becomes very important to ensure that customer response behaviors are tracked and hence used as a basis for developing or predicting future behaviors. It is very important to understand if the tourists are satisfied with the ecotourism, and that their satisfaction is crucial for the development of this type of tourism.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1.3.1 General objective of the study

The general objective of the proposed study is to analyze the relationship between ecotourism knowledge and ecotourist satisfaction and perception in the Ria Formosa Natural Park, Faro.

1.3.2 Specific objectives

- To determine the degree of knowledge of respondents on ecotourism.
- To synthesize knowledge on the factors that derive tourists' satisfaction in the ecotourism industry.
- To understand the perceptions of tourists towards ecotourism in the Ria Formosa Natural Park, located in the Algarve.
- To understand, if any, the environmental concerns of ecotourists within the Ria Formosa Natural Park in Faro.

1.3.3 Research Question

- What is the degree of knowledge of respondents on ecotourism?
- What factors derive tourists' satisfaction in the ecotourism industry?
- What are the perceptions of ecotourists in the Ria Formosa?
- What environmental concerns do ecotourist exhibit in the Ria Formosa?

1.4 Significance of the Study

The study provided suggestions to overcome the barriers which can hold back the development of ecotourism in the host territory . Results in this study enhance our understanding of the interrelations between conservation goals, ecotourism development and rural livelihoods. Moreover, the results of the study provide a broad overview of how tourism development can contribute positively to job opportunities, entrepreneurial skills development, and increased income generation in Ria Formosa. The results of this research also help to improve the standard of living of host population in the ecotourism industry. Besides, it will form the basis for future researchers who wish to pursue their research in the same field. The research results will be a valuable source of information on the tourism industry in Portugal. The magnitude of the relationships between impacts and benefits is also calibrated.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study is focused on the Ria Formosa Natural Park located in Faro. The study will focus on ecotourism developed in this Natural Park. Both primary and secondary data will be used for the data collection.

1.6 Brief Research Methodology

The research strategy here employed the quantitative data and a non-random sampling method. Data was sourced from both primary and secondary sources. The survey was distributed online through a google link via email and social networks. Data obtained from the field was analysed using the Statistical Product and Service Solution (SPSS version 26). Descriptive statistical techniques were used to present the data as well as the used of parametric and non-parametric test. The statistical tools employed in the analysis of the data were simple percentages, frequencies, as well as graphs and charts.

1.7 Organisation of the study

The study is organised into five chapters. Chapter One depicts the introductory information about the study, which involves background to the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, significance of the study, research questions, scope of the study, limitations of the study and the organisation of the study. Chapter Two focuses on related literature. In this section, books, articles, and other works, which have been written by other researchers on the subject, were reviewed. Chapter Three comprises methodology, sampling technique, sources of data, data collection methods and instruments, sample size and sampling technique, and data analysis methods. Chapter Four provides a comprehensive analysis of the survey. Here

statistical tables, cross-tabulations and other analytical tools are used to draw meanings from data into information to aid discussions. The fifth chapter presents the summary of findings, and the chapter six focus on recommendations, and conclusions.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL/LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 History of tourism and eco-tourism

The concept of eco-tourism emerged and gained much attention in the early 1990s and has since then caught the attention of the tourism industry and the academic community alike (Cater, 2015). In his influential anthropogenic analysis, Cater, (2015) has suggested that, based in the US, the community of eco-tourists was established and was later metamorphosed into what is now called The International Ecotourism Society (TIES). He further observes that, its first International Conference (IC) was exhibited in the Caribbean a year after 1990. The establishment of a journal for eco-tourism was given the green light in the year 2002, while the UN declaration of International Year of Eco-tourism as well also came into force during the same period (Cater, 2015).

The essence of these institutions and regulatory frameworks were to project the good image of eco-tourism across the globe (Cater, 2015 and Page and Dowling, 2002). The Quebec Declaration on Eco-tourism comprising 1,200 participants, has stated the main features of eco-tourism (UNEP/WTO, 2002). In the same vein, the focal discussions of the World Economic Summit (WES) and the IYE where participant were made to be “aware of the limitations of this consultative process to incorporate the input of a large variety of ecotourism stakeholders, particularly nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) and local and indigenous communities,” as was made public during the summit. The UNEP and WTO (2002), declared that, “Ecotourism embraces the principles of sustainable tourism, concerning the economic, social and environmental impacts of tourism. Following those declarations, the following distinct and specific principles were noted which distinguish it from the wider concept of tourism. Thus, it was noted that eco-tourism should and must contribute actively towards the conservation of natural and cultural heritage including local and indigenous communities in its planning, development and operations. In this regard, it as well as will be appropriate for one to say that, it will contribute towards community wellbeing, interpret the natural and cultural heritage of the tourism destinations, integrate itself better to eco-tourists and ensure well organised tours for small size groups (Cater, 2015 and UNEP/WTO, 2002).

2.2 Definition and explanation of eco-tourism

The term tourism is a very complicated phenomenon with different interdependent components. Several studies have been conducted into the different parts of tourism such as

green or eco-tourism (Sunu et al., 2021). As a result, scholars in the tourism industry have defined and redefined eco-tourism as such, the definition is still contestable. Despite the divergent views expressed by various scholars in the field, however, most of the scholars converge at the view that, eco-tourism should be defined, described and explained in the context of Sustainable Development (Cater et al., 2014). This observation is pivotal because, most eco-tourism is rural and natural based and directly affects the rural folks, hence the need for its sustainability. Fish et al. (2016), observed that, distinctions in the explanations of tourism for that matter eco-tourism and its nature still remains a subject of contestation and contemplation with its direct effects on natural resources management as well policy and decision making.

The dilemma in its definition and explanation is attributable to the fact that, one cannot confidently point out exactly the components of eco-tourism due to its dimensional complexities (Sunu et al., 2021 and Fish et al., 2016). Cater (2015), argues that the word eco-tourism is etymologically obtained from the prefix “eco” and the root word “tourism”. He further observes that, “eco” refers to the environment, while “tourism” also refers to the movement of people from one destination to another for the purposes of enjoying nature’s gifts (Cater, 2015). Weaver (1998, p.15), has underscored the relevance of the eco-tourism industry and has stated that tourism involves the movement of people from one geographic point, location, locality, community, country and continent to the other purposely for education, recreation, happiness, enjoyment etc. of the natural environment. It is imperative to state that, very little was known about eco-tourism until in the 1980s, when the term came into the limelight through Ceballos Lacuarian. He argued that eco-tourism comprises of traveling to relatively serene, luxurious, conducive and unpolluted natural environment not to serve an end in itself, but to learn, enjoy and appreciate nature; wild plants, animals, rivers, mountains as well as artifacts such as cultural manifestations existed in the past and the present locating in such areas (Weaver, 1998, p. 15).

However, for the definition of eco-tourism to gain international standardised recognition, it was until the emergence of various definitions by philosophical thinkers and other scholars in the field that, after about a decade, David Fennel successfully conducted a content analysis surgery to come out with a standardised and universally acceptable definition (Fennel, 2001; Page and Dowling, 2002 and Fennel, 2003). To support this observation, Page and Dowling (2002), assessed that eco-tourism as nature-based, ecologically sustainable, and environmentally educative. These attributes as mentioned are relevant in understanding eco-

tourism. Diaz et al. (2015), asserted that, the dimensions of ecosystem could be comprised of has three; collectively called “Nature’s Gifts” which abstract human and non-human interactions in the environment. To further recapitulate this observation, the IPBES through its consultations in 2016 has included cultural and non-material aspects to its definition of eco-tourism for global assessment (Fish et al., 2016). Eco-tourism comprises both tangible and intangible materials such as “aesthetic, artistic, educational, spiritual and/or scientific values of the eco-systems” (Fish et al., 2016, Costanza et al., 1997, p.254 and Chan et al., 2012).

This is to say that eco-tourism comprises of anthropocentric values such as biodiversity as well as its values which are of economic relevance to the advancement of any country (Irvine et al., 2016 and Chan et al., 2007). To elucidate this argument further, the Millennium Eco-system Assessment (2005, p.894) observes that, there are “non-material benefits that people obtain from ecosystems through spiritual enrichment, cognitive development, reflection, recreation, and aesthetic experience, including knowledge systems, social relations, and aesthetic values” that serves as entertainment for green services (Fish et al., 2016). It is worth noting that, eco-tourism includes both the cultural and non-cultural values and services that are of huge relevance to socio-economic development (Irvine et al., 2016). Daily (1997), and (Chan et al., 2012) have underscored the relevance of the eco-tourism industry arguing that, there is the need for a holistic approach to develop it. Studies show that, it is yet to be ascertained whether the satisfaction people derive from eco-tourism is enough a force to compel the service consumer willingly pay for eco-services (Daily, 1997 and Chan et al., 2012).

2.3 Factors effecting eco-tourism

In spite of its core objective to educate, create jobs, excitement and joy and to preserve nature, many are those comprising the consumers of eco-tourism who have expressed mixed feelings about the industry; some think it has lived up to expectations while others think it has failed to deliver to expectations (Cater, 2015 and Vivanco, 2002). With respect to this, Indigenous Right Groups as well as NGOs have also raised concerns about the alteration of nature and culture in name of the development of eco-tourism. Affirmatively, not only that eco-tourism poses Western-centric values to local communities which have different values and norms all together (Vivanco, 2002, p.26), but also, local people project eco-tourism as a way of trying “to force people everywhere into the same cultural, economic, and political mold which is bound to generate insecurity, resentment, conflict, and even ecological degradation” (Cater, 2015). Due to the commercialisation as well as monetization of eco-tourism, local people denied access to their own natural resources. As a result of the unfair competitive advantage in

the industry, there is a clear indication that, investors in the industry will be motivated to invest their resources into other entrepreneurial activities to their own advantage, hence creating insecurity and chaos to sustainable livelihood of the local people (Hinch 2001 and Wells and Brandon, 1992).

Hinch (2001), observes that local people register their displeasure towards the way and manner tourists feed on their resources with impunity despite the fact that, the local people develop and own these tourist sites and have much direct contact with the resources. It will interest you to for instance know that, upon examining 23 eco-tourism-based Integrated Conservation Development Projects, it came be known that, with respect to the benefits accrued from eco-tourism, local communities enjoyed from only a small proportion of the revenues generated through eco-tourism despite its existence has almost always caused a replicate damage to the periphery groove (Wells and Brandon, 1992 and Cater, 2015). In fact, it will not be wrong for one to hastily say there is disconnection between theory and practice when mention is made of the real market value of eco-tourism although one cannot confidently point accusing fingers solely on the industry. Since other attributable factors such as recognition failure in terms of the context in which the industry is established are also vital and need thorough inquiry. It is worth of note also that, “the notion of gross opportunism that eco-tourism has frequently been misinterpreted, misappropriated, and misdirected”. Thus, realistically, this miscalculated, misrepresented and ultimate blatant observation should not be blamed entirely on eco-tourism as a matter of fact, it really faces several competitions in the tourism market across the globe (Wells and Brandon, 1992).

2.4 Perceptions and attitudes of people about eco-tourism

For some time now, both at the national and international levels, eco-tourism has been at the heart of policy formulation and implementation as well as a subject of endless contestation (Haines-Young and Potschin, 2013). According to Sagoff (1998), the perceptions and attitudes of people towards a particular “green product” is largely shaped by the idea and the understanding they have about the product since knowledge about eco-services and decision making is practically laborious. In recognizing this, the European Environment Agency (EEA) has underscored the relevance by establishing an initiative known as the ‘Common International Classification of Ecosystem services’ (CICES) through several consultations aiming at developing a more robust and standardized method of eco-tourism mechanisms, regulations and frameworks (Fish et al., 2016).

Researchers reveal that, people are attracted by nature not only because they want to experience its feelings, but sometimes for their existence especially metaphysical conservations. For human curiosity, eco-tourism provides vital information about the interactions between man and the eco-system (Chan et al., 2012). There is the need for more attention to be paid to tourism sector public education to enable tourists better equip themselves with relevant information about tourism and tourist sites. For instance, Irvine et al. (2016), observed that in a survey of 1,726 tourists sampled in England, 70% have knowledge about the ownership of tourist sites with limited knowledge as to whether it is public or private-owned while about 55% had knowledge of state and private owned tourist sites.

2.5 Contribution of eco-tourism to socio-economic development

Eco-tourism is viewed by many scholars as “pay and paying” for the conservation of nature and contributes immensely towards sustainable socio-economic development through foreign exchange earnings (Cater, 2015). Sustainable eco-tourism should be symbiotically a win-win situation with focus on environmental sustainability on mind, which leads to improved livelihoods of local communities. As regards this, eco-tourism leads to the enhancement of socio-economic development through sustained tourist attraction, satisfaction for revenue mobilization and support for environmental conservation (Cater, 2015). It is pivotal to note that, Irvine et al. (2016), observed that eco-tourism provides many benefits to several economies of which the Spanish economy is no exception as was the case in the UK’s National Ecology Assessment.

In recognizing the importance of the eco-tourism industry towards SD as a strategy for poverty reduction in the 1990s, then emerged the establishment of international organisations such as the World Bank, USAID, DFID (the UK) and GTZ (Germany) aiming at prioritising eco-tourism as an alternative sustainable livelihood option to rural communities. In anticipation of its importance, eco-tourism enhances local participation and involvement. Hence, making it a better alternative for local development than orthodox tourism. Unfortunate however is that, the WTO’s report estimates that only between 2% and 4% of the world’s tourist attractions consist of eco-tourism (Cater, 2015).

Adding their voices in support of this argument, Fish et al. (2016), argued that the UN Sub Global Assessment Net (UNSGAN), an institution established by the Millennium Eco-system Assessment (MEA) has underscored the relevance of the eco-system and eco-tourism, particularly stating cultural eco-services. A consultation in 2012 encapsulated that, eco-tourism

“cover all the non-material, and normally non- consumptive, outputs of eco-tourism that affect physical and mental states of people ... [and] ... that this area was particularly problematic in terms of the different terminologies used by the wider community, which often does not make a distinction between services and benefits” (Fish et al., 2016). This is further stressed by a study conducted by Maes et al. (2013), who assessed the relevance of cultural eco-services in the UK, Spain and Germany. Of course, an establishment in 2012 by the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity Ecosystem Services (IPBES) tasked to conduct a study in Africa, America, Asia and Europe has also brought into the limelight similar revelations. Of recent, eco-tourism has been a major economic activity, source of employment and poverty reduction strategy across the globe as it has momentarily gained much prominence in decision making (Davis, 1996; Pinkerton, 1989). For instance, when a consumer realizes the dangers associated with “green products” such as pollution, wild animals, high and low lands, maritime etc, willingness to pay for its consumption is affected drastically (Irvine et al., 2016 and Chan et al., 2012). It is important to mention here that, the monetary value of eco-tourism cannot be quantified since it motivates people to conserve nature.

Many products and services provide many benefits of which eco-tourism is no exception (Chan et al., 2012). The provision of services has many benefits for many reasons, especially material services. Material services have two benefits: monetary and non-monetary benefits. People derive satisfaction from materials obtained at the market in the form of employment and physical activities. However, this is in sharp contrast with non-material goods such as eco-tourism (Kareiva et al., 2011). To quantify the relevance of eco-tourism, it requires a service provision metric approach which is a function of ecological production and a function of economic valuation since it will be difficult if not impossible to use a “priorimetrics” to quantify its benefits (Chan et al., 2012) and as caution in relations to this, we should be mindful how we exploit the environment with impunity, such that it will serve the interest of the present and the future generations (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, p. 43).

2.6 Challenges confronting the eco-tourism industry

The damages caused by the eco-tourism industry is not a new phenomenon just as any developmental initiative and regarding this, Suni et al. (2021) observed that Spain as one of the leading tourism destinations that is much dependent on tourism for survival, has been negatively affected by the impact of the Covid-19 in the first quarter of 2020. It is argued that during the covid restrictions, only about 35% of hotels were made to operate because of

physical distancing restrictions and only about 17% of hotel bed-spaces were occupied by tourist as compare to 2021. In effect, mandatory quarantine and the closure of national and international borders has also had unprecedented impact on eco-tourism in the very recent years because, other tourism related institutions had closed down or reduced production due to reduction in demand for eco-services (Ataguba, 2020).

At different levels, governments have formulated policies to ensure sustainable eco-tourism, but many have been unsuccessful as compared to other sectors (OECD, 2012). In the same direction, Spain recorded about 92% reduction in over-night stay by tourist during this period (INE, 2020) putting unwarranted burden on the tourism industry in Spain and significantly affecting revenue mobilization (De Rosa et al., 2020). Just as did occur in the US, tourism supply chain has been hampered by turbulences such as price fluctuations (Kinra et al., 2020; Ivanov, 2020). According to Suni et al. (2021), tourism is and be seen as well coordinated industry with several actors such suppliers, distributors, government and competitors. Hence, making it a leading a chain of supply making and highly risky and vulnerable investment avenue.

The inception of covid-19 pandemic meant that, national and international borders were closed and mass gatherings were banned; adversely affected both intra and inter boarder tourism because, airlines were not allowed to move in and out of countries which led to a reduction in about 44% to 80% international flight trafficking (ICAO, 2020). Nonetheless, most tour operators in the industry suspended their services in order to accommodate spread of the virus. Tourism Supply Chain (TSC) dissatisfaction such as food supply, electricity outage, computer systems outage, natural disasters etc. has been distressed. Hence, a major factor affecting the tourism industry in Spain (Fung and Fung (2014). The long-term impact of the supply chain has caused risky, “low-frequency-high-impacts with multiple and replicate events such as long-term interrupted businesses, parallel disruption in demand and supply chain with their ripple effects” (Kinra et al., 2019; Ivanov, 2020). Differences in interests between hotel management and tour operators usually creates conflicts as each investor tries to protect its vertical interest especially tour operators (Tapper and Font, 2004). It is worthy of note that, stakeholders such as government, tour operators, competitors and consumers are all in the quest to protect their peroqua interests (Suno et al., 2021).

2.7 Institutional frameworks on eco-tourism

Frameworks are important tools and mechanisms that help protect and safeguard the interest of institutions. In relations to eco-tourism to be precise, several scholars and governments alike have put in place enactments and measures at different levels to regulate the ecological, social, cultural and economic interest of their countries such as policy formulations, negotiations and enactments (Sunu et al., 2021). There has been a paradigm shift from government sole proprietorship of eco-tourism policy formulation to inclusivity and collectivity (Bramwell, 2011; Dredge and Jamal, 2015) which requires careful planning to avoid conflict of interest amongst actors in the industry (Guo et al., 2012). International organisations such as the World Bank (WB), USAID, DFID, GIZ, Wild Life Fund (WLF), Conservation International, the Nature Conservancy, World Tourism Organisation and the International Eco-tourism Society (TIES) are among the few implementing entities and organisations responsible for ensuring that the industry performs to its utmost best.

2.8 Cognitive Consistency Theory

Theories are used by philosophers to explain phenomena and as such, this is inspired by the Cognitive Consistency Theory and Theory of Perception. As regards the Theory of Cognitive Consistency, Démuth (2013), has observed that, amongst and between people, their attitudes and behaviours are usually consistent with their actions and inactions. This is to say that people do not just start doing things haphazardly but put it into careful thinking before acting upon. In the light of this, researchers sought and continue to seek a divergent reconciliation between people's attitudes and behaviours for rational consistency. The Cognitive Consistency Theory gained much popularity from the 1940s to the 1960. The theory was propounded and inspired by the Fritz Heider's Balance Theory, the Cognitive Dissonance Theory, Theory of Congruity and the Theory of Symmetry; to examine and explore multiple tasks and processes variables. The fundamental argument of the Cognitive Consistency Theory is based on the fact that, conditions of human mutual interactions substantially shape their mental faculties (Démuth, 2013). The principles underling the theory of cognitive consistency is based on four structural dynamics, namely, the cognitive states, dynamic structural properties, dynamic character of mental properties and reconstructions.

It is argued that the theory was as a result of consistent strive towards achieving the Cognition Theory. As cited by Démuth (2013, in Kurt Lewin 1935), psychologists have tried to propound a theory on "The Psychology of Knowing", to explain and examine human behaviour in relations to our relationship with the social and natural environment. Science on how humans

behave towards the environment is pivotal because, this affects the quality of life. In other jurisdiction, (William McGuire 1968 and Démuth, 2013) had strived hard to construct “A psychology of Interference” which will help examine how one idea leads to the other psychologically. However, just like any other theory, the Consistency theory is floored in respect of explaining rich and complex phenomena for evaluation and computation consistency (Read et al., 1997; Read and Miller, 1994). The theory is also limited because “the theory was confined also to structures in which the strength of the units and the weight of the relations were fixed at unitary levels” (Démuth, 2013). It is pivotal to state that, in reality, the Cognitive Consistency Theory was influenced by the Forced Compliance Paradigm and the Neobalance Theory in the 1960s (Démuth (2013)).

The Cognitive Consistency Theory has been adopted because of its relevance to the study. It has shared light on how people, particularly tourists make rational decisions and act upon them. In the light of this, it has given insightful details about how humans make rational choices and what informs those choices. For instance, for a tourist to choose between going to site A or B, careful thought regarding that decision has to be taken as whether to visit A or B and what is involved in terms of cost-benefit and risk analyses. These have their replicate effects on eco-tourism because, in places where there are good road network, constant energy and water supply, security among others, people as rational beings will prefer and be willing to pay and enjoy such green services as opposed to places where those facilities are lacking.

2.9 Theory of Perception and Planned behaviour

Another passionate theory that has influenced this research is the Gregory’s Theory of Perception. In this theory, studies can be made from several perspectives. For instance, in understanding this theory, one needs to thoroughly understand the meaning of Cognition, its conditions, validity, limitations and mechanisms of acquisition (Démuth (2013)). Philosophers argue that our perceptions are divide into internalised and externalised. Psychologically, internalised perceptions are acquired through subjective cognition of already existing body of knowledge. For instance, Plato and Descartes who ascribe to this standpoint argue that knowledge is but acquired through the collection of existing body of knowledge. They further stressed that, this approach enables one to explain innate and intuitive cognitions. However, they could not clarify how, where and why those ideas get their way into the human mind. Nonetheless, they could not also explain the reason humans do not have the same knowledge, why knowledge is not already known to us at birth and why are humans sensible (Démuth (2013)).

Bashir et al. (2019), noted that, contrary to this are those who also think human perception and cognition is through external sources and experiences. These proponents argue that, the human mind is in the form of a blank paper (tabula rasa) and external realities cause imprint on the human mind. Problematic is the fact that, the theory could not prove how the external realities are perceived and imprinted. In fact, either of the proponents; externalism and internalism are confronted with the issue of explanation of human awareness of new realities in our consciousness and the approach of seeking information. Scholars have become satisfied with the fact that, “What we call the world is nothing else but a set of various perceptions, feelings and ideas” and phenomenalist totally agree with this viewpoint; cognition is based on the subject of our perceptions. In other words, our perceptions are based on what we perceive and to us as humans is nothing accessible but our perceptions. Our assumptions are based on allegations and perceptions which are caused by rational construct. Other than this, humans also have a mechanism of identifying images, ideas and rational constructs created by our own selves (Démuth, 2013 and Ajzen, 1985).

Basically, there are two proponents; bottom-up and top-down processes of examining and explaining human perceptions as a means of acquiring and processing the information obtained and both are influenced by the direction of the flow of information. According to Ajzen (1985), bottom-up simply means beginning at the lower level while top down means supporting the idea that, in the process of discrimination and sensory stimulus, our feeling of sensory data receptors and their processing presume a downward influence of higher cognitive structure that creates organisation and later determine them and this is called top down effect. This approach is basically established on the fact that, for the sensory stimulus, a person needs to know or pre-experience with other influences that will help organise and form cognitive contents (Bashir et al., 2019 and Démuth, 2013).

The Planned Behaviour Theory (TPB) is most preferably used by philosophers as an indicator to explain, examine and understand the behaviour of consumers (Bashir et al., 2019). It is observed that, the individual is socially responsible of taking control of their social behaviours and this behaviour is driven by the engagement intention (Fishbein, 1975 and Ajzen, 1980). Generally, the theory of TPB is applied in the study of phenomenon relating to social behaviour, behavioural intentions, attitudes, and beliefs (Ajzen, 1985) which makes it a perfect tool of analysis in this study. In the light of this, Bashir et al. (2019), has indicated that, one’s attitude is used to determine a settled behaviour and feelings about life.

Human behaviours are subjective norms which usually signals the social pressure the person feels like performing or not to perform a behaviour. For example, either to visit a tourist site or not to visit. A person's belief can determine how the person exhibits specific behaviours about the factors that promote or hinder one's behaviour exhibition (Bashir et al., 2019). However, one can apply the TPB in the tourism industry to analyse, explain and examine several related issues that compose of our norms and consciousness towards the environment (Bashir et al., 2019). According to Rahman and Reynolds (2016), existing body of knowledge has it that, eco-tourism is greatly affected by consumer's readiness to alter personal values for the protection of the environment.

Chen and Tung (2014), on the other hand argues that consumer's environmental consciousness impacts positively on the attitudes towards subjective values, eco-tourism and perceived controlled behaviours. Hence, both consumer's personal values and environmental consciousness are adopted into the TPB which helps develop an extension of the theory. Particularly, considering the fact that personal individual values are inseparable constructs of the behaviour intentions of a consumer to consume eco-services (Huang et al., 2014).

The consumption of green products involves environmental friendliness; practices that are ecologically friendly (Mostafa, 2007; Lee, 2009; Huang et al., 2014) in order not to adversely cause damage to the natural environment. A major factor that influences consumer's behaviour in relations to green products is the engagement appetite that attracts people to such products (Fishbein, 1975 and Ajzen, 1980). In support of this observation for instance, consumer behaviours in the hotel industry are quickly shaped by the good intention because it can motivate them to revisit the green product or make recommendations to other consumers of the said product (Namkung and Jang, 2007; Han and Back, 2008; Choi et al., 2015). In the light of this argument, Lee et al. (2010), also observed that, the environment is a priority concern for green product consumers as it influences their behaviour. As a result, prudent, effective and efficient measures and marketing strategies need to be taken to promote positive purchasing power decision making to better understand behaviour of green service consumers (Han et al., 2010; Choi et al., 2015).

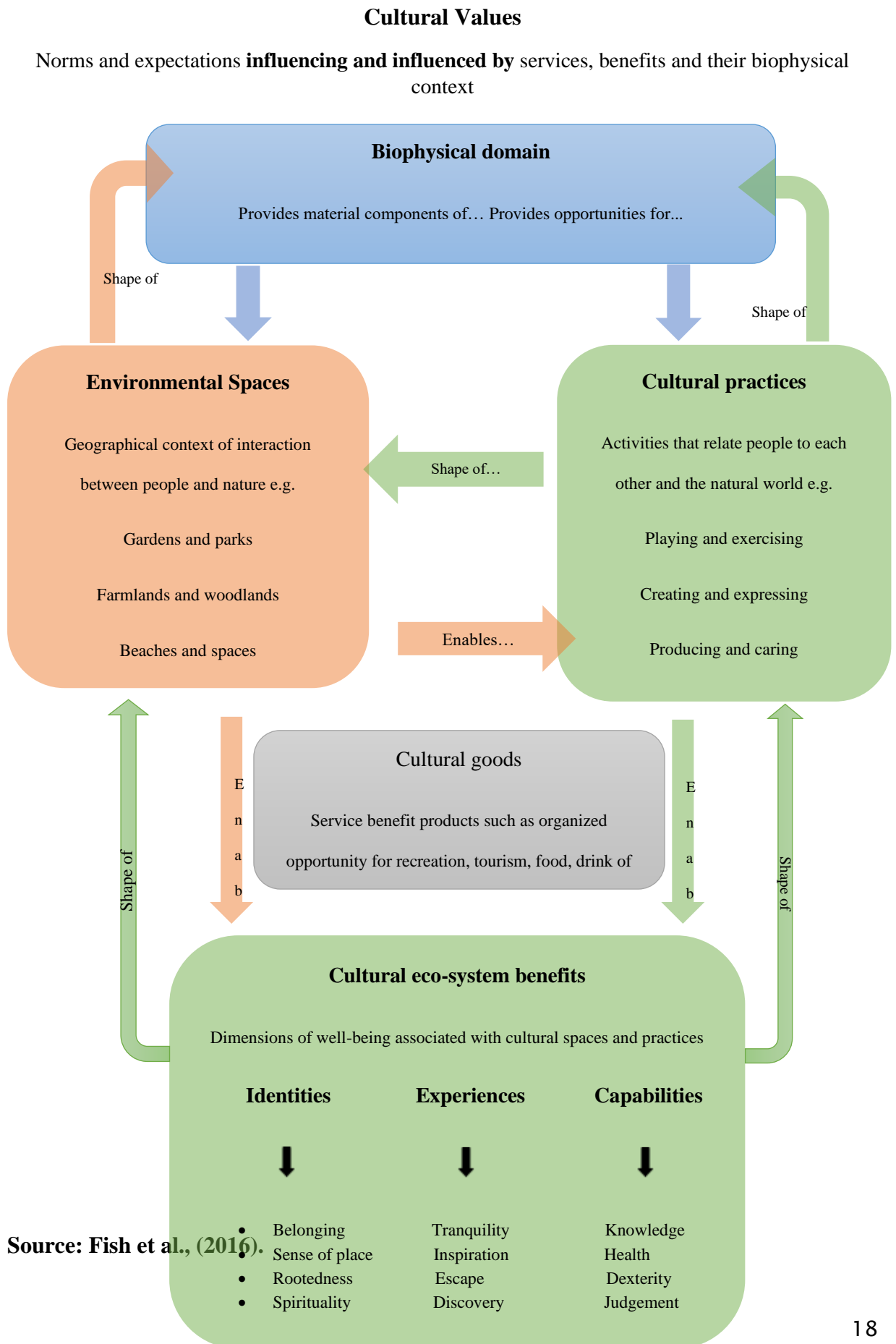
As elucidated earlier, personal moral norms are generally referred to as environmental obligations because, moral obligations show the precise responsibility to ethically perform a duty when faces moral choices (Ture and Ganesh, 2014; Choi et al., 2015, Beck and Ajzen, 1991; Leonard et al., 2004; Chen and Tung, 2014).). Huang et al. (2014) has also noted that,

the behaviour of consumers of green services is inspired by the consistent feelings, evaluations and tenancies they have about the environmental activities and pollution (Huang et al., 2014). It is in line with this argument that, a consumer of a particular product may be concerned about the reactions of other people with on account of their addiction to green services. In the event that consumer's values outclass the overall attitudes towards eco-tourism, it can affect staying for the service.

2.10 Conceptual framework on eco-tourism

Arguably, for eco-tourism to be effective, there needs to be a robust eco-system services framework which is the heart core because, the whole concept of tourism is facilitated by an integrated web such as services, values and benefits. Hence, failure to reorganize this in planning and management will have both implicit and explicit effects on eco-tourism (Chan et al., 2012). According to the National Research Council of U.S economics and eco-tourism, philosophical perspectives are closely linked and their integration has become major area of interest for social scientist due to its contribution towards social policy development (Turner and Daily, 2008). Hence in the light of that, ample submissions need to be dedicated to develop a framework within which the study of eco-tourism can be conceptualised. Fish et al. (2016), observed that to clearly understand eco-tourism, it is important to incorporate and integrate the various components of eco-tourism comprising of material aspects such as water bodies, mountains, forest reserves, animals among others and non-material aspects such as cultural practices, norms and values in order to be able to conceptualise the complex issues that arise and analyse them. He further states this will help decision and policy makers incorporate it in policy frameworks for decision making. Figure 2.1 illustrates the conceptual framework on eco-tourism.

Figure 2.1- conceptual framework on eco-tourism



From figure 2.1, culture is anthropologically analysed in the context of eco-tourism. It can be observed from the diagram that, eco-tourism comprises of the biological domain consisting of environmental spaces and cultural practices. As can be seen, environmental space also comprises of the geographical interaction between man and nature such as gardens, parks, farmlands, woodlands, beaches, spaces, rivers, streams among others that interact and shape the material components of eco-tourism. This in reference to the diagram leads to eco-cultural benefits and enabling cultural practices. It can also be observed that, cultural practices and activities that relate people to one another with the natural world such as playing, exercising, creating, expressing, producing, caring, gathering and consuming which shape eco-system benefits and biological domain as well as cultural ecosystems.

At the heart of the framework is eco-cultural goods, services and benefit products such as organized opportunity for recreation, tourism, food, drink of local province, local festivals among others. In analysing the framework, it will be interesting to know that cultural ecosystem benefits influence both the environment and cultural practices through dimensions of well-being associated with cultural spaces and practices where identities lead to sense of belongingness, peace, rootedness and spirituality. From the diagrammatic illustration, experiences bring about tranquility, inspiration, escape and discovery while capabilities lead to knowledge, health, dexterity and judgement.

The framework is unique in the sense that, it lays emphasis on integration of human and non-human interactions within our environment. Eco-tourism is contextualised as a product of nature which is useful to the well-being of mankind in general. It is worthy of note that, eco-tourism contributes significantly not only in material form, but also in non-material form such as development of capabilities and experiences. The rationale behind the framework is based on rest and relation explicitness and not linear and unidirectional constructions. As a result, the framework is purposely designed to analyse the complexities in integrating eco-tourism with the environment.

In trying to understand the ecosystem approach, it looks more complex than we think as was not in the Casade Model. The framework reveals that humans contribute what is called capital input towards environmental sustainability and more particularly eco-tourism. Previous discussions for instance, Constanza et al. (2011: 2), has underscored its crucial effects stating that cultural eco-system provide what is called a “combine with built, human, and social capital to produce recreation, aesthetic, scientific, cultural identity, or other “cultural” benefits”.

Knowledge about eco-tourism contributes to reap the fullest benefits of the industry. Thus, analysing eco-tourism from the perspective of culture and non-material products, it helps gain more insight about the biophysical aspects of the environment which anthropologies believe should be incorporated in both the physical and metaphysical aspects of culture.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

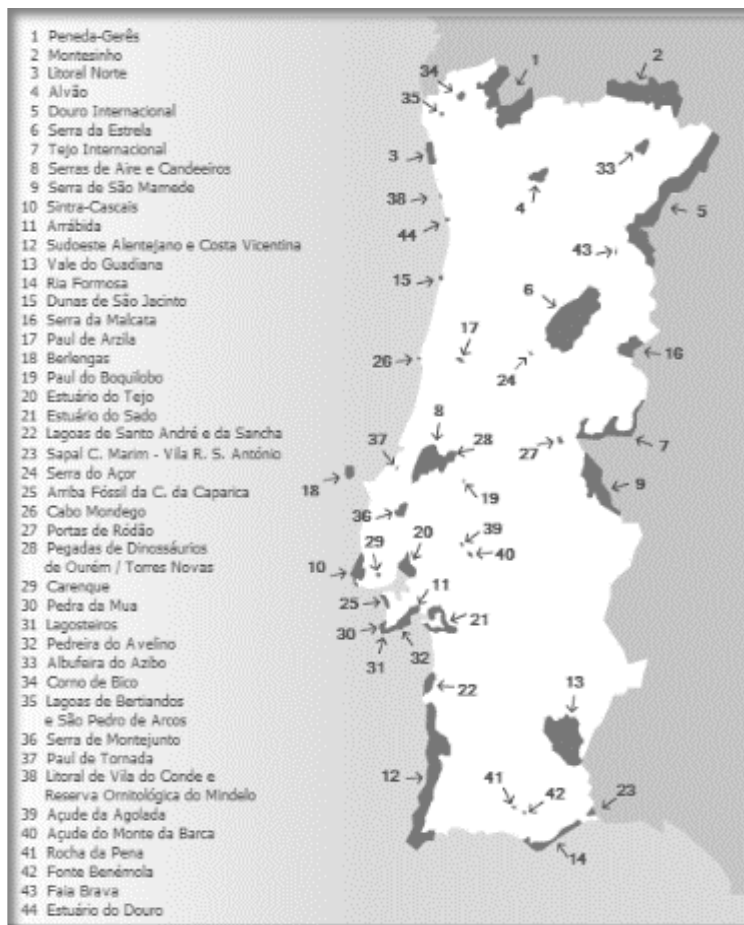
3.1 Introduction to the research methodology

The profile, research method and research design, target population and sample size are discussed here in this chapter. There have also been explicit discussions on the techniques employed for sampling, methods and tools used for the collection of data as well as scope of the research herein. In the light of this, data collection and identification of the critical variables have been extensive dependent on the relevant literature reviewed in the very immediate chapter. From the existing body of knowledge, it is evident there has not been any explicit literature on the connection between the perceptions and attitudes of tourists towards eco-tourism in the Ria Formosa Natural Park (RFNP), particularly the area under investigation. Hence, calling for the need to investigate into it.

3.2 Profile of the study area

The relevance of wetlands is well documented and recognised worldwide and as such, the RFNP is among the most wetlands particularly in Europe and the world at large as is located in the south-eastern coast of the Faro Municipality of Algarve (Ceia et al, 2010). Only about three percent of Europe is made up of this kind of vegetation. The RFNP is globally amongst the most industrious eco-tourisms due to its variety of aquatic bird species (Amaral, 2009). Stretched to five municipalities, the RFNP covers an area of about sixty kilometers occupying around 18 400 ha, 7 895 ha of which are inland and 10 505 ha wetlands. Amongst the most exciting, restricted areas in the Faro Municipality of the Algarve Region of Portugal is the RFNP, not just for its variety of landscapes, but also due to its unique landscape and location. The park is particularly referred to in the Portuguese Language as “Ria Formosa”. Recently elected as one of Seven Natural Wonders and one of the three most restricted areas of Portugal, it has been among the most visited places during holydays in Portugal since 1987 (Sofia and Da, 2015). Figure 3.1 illustrates the natural protected areas in Portugal and the geographic location the RFNP.

Figure 3.1- Map of Portuguese protected areas and geographic location of Ria Formosa Natural Park.



Source: Sofia and Da, (2015).

It was considered a natural park in order to contribute towards regional and national development as well as give protection to natural values and adopt compactible measures inline its objectives (Sofia and Da, 2015). It also served and still serves as the gate of cheerful welcome of the millions of visitors to the country. However, due to its peculiar coastal lagoon, continues movement of currents, winds and tides, it constantly undergoes metamorphoses over the years. On the other hand, it supports economic activities such as fishing, aquaculture, shipping, harvesting of bait, tourism, salt production and sediment extraction (Ribeiro et al, 2008 and Ceia et al, 2010). Protected from the sea by a five-barrier-island and two peninsulas; the Peninsula of Ancão as referred to by the locals of Ilha/Praia de Faro (Sociedade Polis Litoral, 2010), the Barreta Island also known as Ilha Deserta, the Culatra Island (also known as Culatra/Faro Island, where the lighthouse of Santa Maria is located, the Island of Armona, the Island of Tavira, Cabanas Island and, finally, the Peninsula of Cacela, covers an area of

about 18,000 hectares. Such a beautiful land is tended along the Leeward Coast of the Algarve all along the cities of Loulé, Faro, Olhão, Tavira and Vila Real de Santo António. It is pivotal to note that, the RFNP due to its geographical location such as barrier-islands, marshes, tidal flats, islets, dunes, saltpans, fresh water lagoons, agricultural areas and woodlands which hold an impressive diversity of flora and fauna, the Ramsar Convention defined and included it in the list of World-wide interest of Wetlands.

Apparently, being among the Natural 2,000 network, the park serves as a paradise for those interested in watching emblematic aquatic birds such as colourful flamingos, chameleons and other animal species; existing only in the southern part of Portugal and the seahorses (there exists one of the largest populations of seahorses in the world). Hence, many people labelled it Important Bird Area (IBA) (Sofia and Da, 2015). It hosts nearly 20,000 birds during the winter period, serves as a transit for migrants from Europe to Africa and the vice versa as well as a shelter for Purple Swamphen. in Portugal. The Decree-law nº 373/87, of 9 th December, 1987 created the park with its regulatory framework (Amaral, 2009). Characteristically, the park has shallow waters, nursery lagoons, shellfish farming among others which serve as employment for people. It is worth noting that, there are several protected areas in this region of the country, particularly the Quinta do Lago area which holds most attraction. However, the Ria Formosa protected area is amongst the oldest in the country particularly in the Faro District; formed around the 18th century by the last and greatest ocean earthquake of the time. The changes in the landscape such as saltwater marshes, fresh water lagoons, beautiful greenery environment, accessible quality road network, good bridges and above all, is a heaven of peace and serenity by all standard particularly the stuff of imagery at dawn and sunset. This protected area also has about 700 different striking flower species, good climatic condition; wetlands, attractive vegetation that is mild and sunny all year round and the sand dunes. The exotic soil type makes it attractive to pine trees, palm trees and several species of shrubs. What makes it most appetising is the fact that, one can hire a bicycle, horse, float or even walk if preferred to observe such creatures as indigenous, reptiles such as chameleons, marsh frogs, insects to mention but a few (Vowles and Vowles, 1994 and Sofia and Da, 2015).

research problem. Furthermore, the study was also cross sectional in nature in the sense that data was collected at a specific point in time and this process was not repeated. It is pivotal to also note that, the study employed the survey approach where questionnaires were used as the main source of data collection.

3.4 Population of the Study

The target population of the study comprised all tourists that visited the Ria Formosa Natural Park, Faro over the last years, from 2019 to 2021. The total number of tourists was not possible to be measured.

3.5 Sampling Size and Sampling method

As it was not possible to have the sampling frame (list of all tourists who have visited the natural park), for the purposes of the study, the researcher could not employ a random sampling method, hence a non-random sampling method is used. In using a non-random sampling method, the researcher used a convenient sampling method. Thus, all the respondents who were willing to participate in the study were selected. The researcher ensured that respondents were not pressurized to participate in the study.

As this study aimed at measuring the knowledge, experience and perceptions of tourists about the Ria Formosa Natural Park in Faro, tourists that have been in the Natural Park were invited to participate in the study. An electronic questionnaire was developed and is described over the next sections. The questionnaire was prepared in google form and the link was shared by mail and social networks, such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Telegram. In all, 150 responses were received.

3.6 Data sources

Data for the study was obtained from both primary and secondary sources.

3.6.1 Primary data collection

Shortcomings of secondary data sources such as out datedness and inadequacy in terms of coverage, necessitated the use of primary source for first data. Electronic data collection approach through the use of google form was employed and this enabled the researcher to cover a large population quickly and at reasonable cost.

3.6.2 Secondary data collection

Secondary data was obtained from sources like annual reports, libraries, books, journals, articles, archived reports from the Town Council, and internet resources relating to the study.

As these were readily available and easier to comprehend and comprised of extensively research work.

3.7 Data Collection Instruments and Methods

The study employed the use of questionnaires to collect data from the respondents. The questionnaire was grouped into two sections. The first section focused on the knowledge of the tourists on eco-friendly tourism, factors that drive their satisfaction, tourists level of satisfaction towards the park, respondents' perception towards the ecotourism and their environmental concerns (Bazazo et al., 2017; Forje et al., 2020; Sofia, 2015; Wang & Wang, 2015; Yacob, 2010). The next part of the questionnaire focused on tourism demographic data of the respondent. This part includes questions about nationality, gender, age, education level, marital status. The questionnaires were designed in accordance with the objectives of the study which enabled the respondent to explore and administer the questionnaires in English, as it was among the widely spoken languages in the study area. It is worth mentioning that the questionnaires were prepared in a semi-structure manner; composing of both open and close ended questions which have facilitated easy administration and computation.

The questionnaire contained 21 items which mainly were presented on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. In order to analyze the reliability of the instrument, the test-retest reliability was employed in a twelve-day interval to 20 respondents.

3.7.1 Data Collection Procedure

The data collection was done online over a period of four months duration from July 2021 to October 2021. Respondents were thus asked to respond to the set of items of the questionnaires. The researcher sent the questionnaire to the respondents by sharing the google forms link. The link was shared by mail and social networks, such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Telegram. In all, the data collection took about four months to be fully completed. A pilot test was conducted for this study ,10 copies of the questionnaire were administered to test for the validity and internal consistency of the research instrument

3.7.2 Validity and Reliability of Data

In this study, the test-retest reliability, as well as internal reliability using the Cronbach's alpha estimate was used. Face validity was ascertained by ensuring that the items on the instruments used in the study contained statements that measured the various attributes the were intended to measure. Furthermore, the content validity of the instruments was also established by three skilled specialists in test and measurements at the University. Test-retest reliability was

conducted using a sample of 60 respondents. The researcher employed a twelve-day interval to ensure respondents would not be too familiar with their previous responses which could help ascertain whether they adequately understood the questionnaire. This is necessary to ascertain whether the items on the scale are properly understood as expected in this setting.

3.8 Pre -testing research instruments

The data collection instruments were pretested to ascertain their reliability and validity. Pre-testing was carried out in the Sapal de Castro Marim e Vila Real de Santo António Natural Park of the Olhão Municipality of the Algarve Region. This district was selected because characteristically, it shares boundary and similar features in eco-tourism, climate, vegetation and institutional framework with the study area. Five green consumers were purposive-conveniently selected from this natural park for the pretesting. The pretesting results have helped to restructure some of the questions in the interview guide. It also helped appreciate some of the problems that were most likely to be encountered during the actual data collection. Furthermore, the pretesting also served as further restructuring of the instruments and the questions; to test the methods of analysis that were to be useful for the data analysis.

3.9 Data Analysis

The data obtained were transcribed, coded and analysed using SPSS software version 26 and Microsoft Excel.

First of all, Cronbach alpha was used to test data reliability. Then, descriptive statistics was used to analyze and present age, gender, level of education and marital status of the respondents, as well as the research questions. In addition, the used of non-parametric and parametric was employed to test the relationship among variables.

3.10 Ethical Procedures

The study was conducted in conformity to ethical codes in social science research. Ethical considerations included ensuring informed consent, voluntary participation, privacy, anonymity and confidentiality of the interviewee's data as well as its harmlessness. The consent of the respondents was sought before engaging with each of them. All the respondents were assured their rights would be protected if they agreed to participate in the study and that partaking in the study was voluntary. The purpose the of the research was also made known to the respondents. All respondents were assured that, the research was not going to be harmful to them in any way. The respondents were also assured of confidentiality of the data provided as the data were to be used purely for academic purposes only.

3.11 Summary

This chapter detailed profile of the study area; the Ria Formosa Natural Park, located in the Faro District and the Algarve Region of Portugal. The chapter also discussed, the Interpretivism or Social Constructivism paradigm was adopted for the study. The sub-section advanced on the research methods or approach and the research design. Inclusively, it also detailed the population of the study area and thorough discussions were made in the sub-sections underlining the objectives that inspired the adoption of a qualitative method and a case study design for the study.

Convenient sampling technique was employed in obtaining the sample size from the sample frame. Pertinent issues on the data collection method and the instrument such as questionnaire was also advanced therein. It also detailed the pre-testing which was carried out in the Sapal de Castro Marim e Vila Real de Santo António Natural Park of the Olhão Municipality of the Algarve Region. This district was selected because characteristically, it shares boundary and similar features in eco-tourism, climate, vegetation and institutional framework with the study area

Ethical issues relating to social science research such as research respondent relationships, issues of confidentiality, seeking consent of respondents, voluntary participation and avoidance of anonymity were also discussed in this chapter. Finally, the tool and method of data processing and analysis such as the use of Excel was also advanced. In the subsequent chapter, discussions will be advanced on the finding results, based on the various themes and objectives of the research.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the analysis, interpretation and discussion of the results of the study. The general objective of the study is to analyze the relationship between ecotourism knowledge and ecotourists' satisfactions and perceptions in the Ria Formosa Natural Park, Faro. Questionnaire was used as a means for data collection. Data collected was analyzed using the statistical package for service solution (SPSS) version 26 after it was gathered using Microsoft Excel via google forms.

Preliminary analysis was first conducted, thus test for issues relating to missing data. Then, data was analyzed based on the research objectives. Discussion was done by comparing findings with literature related to the current study.

4.2 Preliminary Analysis

4.2.1 Data Examination: Checking for errors, outliers and assessing normality

Upon resolving issues of missing data, other issues such as outliers needed to be inspected and sought out. One of the most important activities that should never be neglected in data analysis is data examination.

Issues of outliers were experienced with some of the variables, hence the impact of these outliers attracted attention, however after a cursory comparison of the means of the respective variables, it was observed that the difference was not significant. Therefore, it is plausible to conclude that the outliers would not create much problems in the current analysis, hence those data were retained (Pallant, 2013).

The preliminary analysis prior to the main analysis was conducted in a three-stage process. Firstly, the normality of the salient variables in the study were assessed using the skewness and kurtosis which indicates the symmetry and peakness of the distribution respectively, the threshold between +1 and -1.00 was used as the basis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). From the table below, it can be inferred that a lot of negative skewness was observed, that is, at the right sides while a negative kurtosis observed means that the distribution was flat relatively (Egyiri, 2020). Though some of the variables showed negative skewness (though did not defy normal distribution assumption), according to Pallant (2013), datasets comprised of large samples will not have problems of normality. Furthermore, other descriptive statistics such as percentages

of the study variables were conducted. This was followed by the used of Pearson and Spearman correlation of the variables in the study. In order to ensure that the scales used for collection of data was internally reliable and consistent, an internal reliability analysis was conducted using the Cronbach alpha (α). According to Nunnally (1978) opined that an alpha value of 0.70 or above constitutes a reliable scale.

Table 4.1: Normality and Cronbach Alpha test for study instruments

Cronbach Alpha, Normality test and Descriptive Statistics of Study

Variables	Kurtosis	Skewnes s	Cronbach's Alpha	Mean	S.D
KOE	.237	-.96	0.81	3.82	1.25

Note: KOE- Knowledge on Ecotourism

Cronbach Alpha, Normality test and Descriptive Statistics of Study

Variables	Kurtosis	Skewnes s	Cronbach's Alpha	Mean	S.D
Ecotourism Factors	-.071	-.701	.708	3.50	1.68
Perceptions of Tourists	-.516	-.523	.733	3.32	1.31
Environmental Concerns	-.989	-.347	.725	3.17	1.43

4.2.2 Validity of Measures

The researcher intended to assess the overall fitness of the three instruments by way of a construct validity since they were new in this setting. Although the instruments used in this study are standard questionnaires, the researcher did some adjustments to some of them to suit the respondents. According to Hu and Bentler (1999), the factor results obtained from this study was acceptable and hence the overall fitness of the three instruments was validated. Below is a summary of the results of the factor solution for the three variables:

Table 4.2: Measurement models for three variables

Fit Measures	CFA-EF ²	CFA- POF ³	CFA-EC ⁴
N	60	60	60
CFI	0.94	0.91	0.97
RMSEA	0.08	0.07	0.07
χ^2/df	1.41	3.42	1.21

Note: EF: Ecotourism Factors, PL: Perception of Factors, Environmental Concerns

4.3 Study sample

This chapter describes the participants of this study with respect to their gender distribution, age distribution, level of education status distribution, nationality, etc.... A summary of the characteristics of the respondents is presented in the tables below:

² CFA-EF: Exploratory Factor Analysis -Economic Factors

³ CFA-POF: Exploratory Factor Analysis- Perception of Factors

⁴ CFA-EC: Exploratory Factor Analysis- Environmental Concerns

Table 4.3: Demographic Characteristics of the sample

<i>Frequency statistics for Respondents</i>			
Variables	Items	Frequency	Percentage(%)
Gender	Male	88	58.7
	Female	62	41.3
Age(years)	18-27	22	15.0
	28-37	54	36.7
	38-47	40	27.2
	48-57	31	21.1
Education	Elementary	10	6.7
Qualification	Secondary	10	6.7
	Professional	49	32.9
	Higher	65	43.6
	Other	15	10.1
Number Children	0	40	26.7
	1	85	56.7
	2	19	12.0
	3	7	4.7
Marital Status	Married/Living Together	61	40.9
	Single	52	34.9
	Divorced /Separated	32	21.5
	Widowed	4	2.7

Gender distribution

Eighty-eight (88) respondents, representing 58.7% of the overall sample are males and sixty-one (62) representing 41.3% of the total sample are females. This indicates that the majority of the respondents are males.

Age Distribution

Fifty-four (54) respondents, which is representative of 36.7% of the total sample are within the ages of 28 to 37. Forty (40) of the respondents which is equivalent to 27.2% of the total sample are within the ages of 38 to 47, Thirty-one (31) of the respondents, which makes up 21.1% of the total sample of respondents are between the ages of 48 to 57 years. Lastly, twenty-two (22) respondents with a percentage of 15% are between the age of 18-27 and

The mean age of respondents who participated in the study was 37.14 years ranging from 18 to 67 years.

Education Distribution

The data shows that the respondents are highly educated, 43.6% hold a higher degree certificate. About 32.9% of the respondent have a professional certificate. Only 13.7% of the total of respondents do not have a university degree.

Marital Status

Sixty-one (61) of the total respondents representing 40.9% of the overall sample are married/living together. On the other hand, the number of respondents single are Fifty-two (52) in number representing 34.9% of the total sample of respondents. Thirty-two (32) with a percentage of 21.5% are divorced/separated and lastly, four (4) of the respondents representing 2.7% of the total sample are widowed.

Number of Children

Regarding the number of children, forty (40) respondents have no children, representing 26.7% of the total sample. Respondents with one child are eighty-five (85) represent 56.7% of the total sample. Respondents with two (2) and (3) children are eighteen (18) and (7) in number representing 12.0 % and 4.7% respectively.

Nationality

Table 4.4-Nationalities of Respondents

Nationality	Frequency	Percentage (%)
British	62	41.3
French	22	14.7
Dutch	17	11.3
Portuguese	19	12.7
Spain	10	6.7
German	7	4.7
Chinese	3	2.0
Nigerian	2	1.3
Ghanaian	3	2.0
Irish	2	1.3
Croatie	2	1.3
Japon	1	0.7

Table 4.4 shows the nationalities of the respondents represented in the study. The data is indicative of the fact that most of the respondents are of British nationality (41.3%), followed by French (14.7%), Portuguese (12.7%) and Dutch (11.3%). British being the highest numbers of visitors to this park, it is reflective of the size of total British visit to Portugal for tourism purpose as indicated in Statista data of 2019-2020 (Statista, 2020). Other nationalities are from Africa and Asia

4.4 Experience on Ria Formosa Park

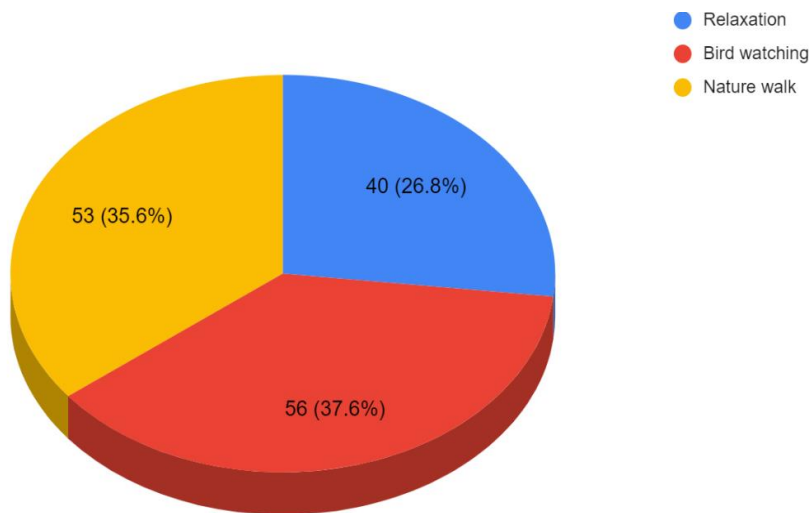
Table 4.5: Number of visits to the Ria Formosa Park

First visit to the Ria Formosa Park?	Frequency	Percentage(%)
Yes	73	48.7
No	77	51.3
Total	150	100.0
If no, how many years have been a tourist at the Ria Formosa Natural Park	Frequency	Percentage(%)
Less than 1	24	31.2

1-5	39	50.6
6-10	13	16.9
11 and above	1	1.3
Total	77	100.0

From the data collected in Table 4.5, it appears that around 49% of the total respondents went there for the first time. However, the data also show that 50.6% of the respondents had been there for a period within 1 to 5 years.

Graphic 4.1- Thought About Ria Formosa



Regarding the thought of respondents concerning the main reason why they visit Ria Formosa Natural Park (graphic 4.1), it is evident that most of the respondents perceive the Ria Formosa Natural Park to be a place for Birth watching (37.6%). Besides, most of the respondents are also of the opinion that the main reason they visit the park are about Nature walk (35.6%) whenever Ria Formosa Natural Park comes to mind. The few of the remaining respondents perceive it to be a place for relaxation (26.8%).

Table 4.6 View of Respondents towards ecotourism

	Frequency	Percentage(%)
It is a natural place that connect with nature	25	17.1
It is a natural place for nature observation while providing economic opportunities such as revenue realisation	121	82.9

The result on table 4.6 shows that respondents view of ecotourism tend more as an economic factor to provide opportunity such a s revenue realisation (82.9%) than just a natural place to connect with nature (17.1%).

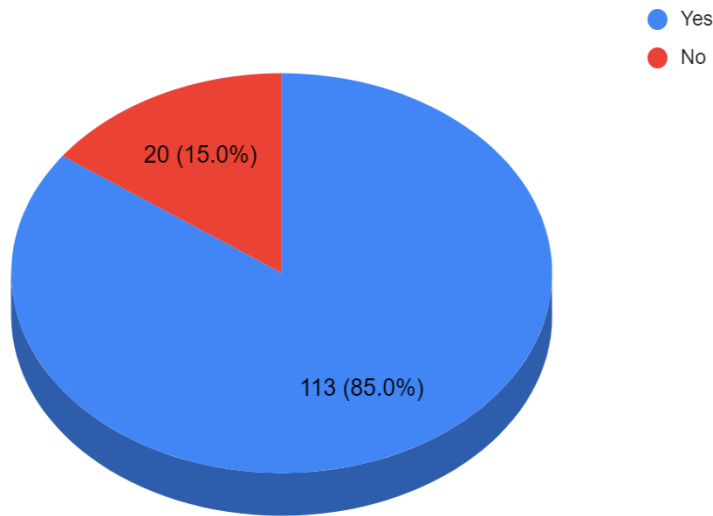
Table 4.7- Revisit the park

Would you recommend this Park	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	127	88.2
No	17	11.8
Revisit the Park	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	118	83.1
No	24	16.9

The majority of respondents 127(88.2%) would recommend the park to friends whiles only 17(11.8%) of the respondents said they would not.

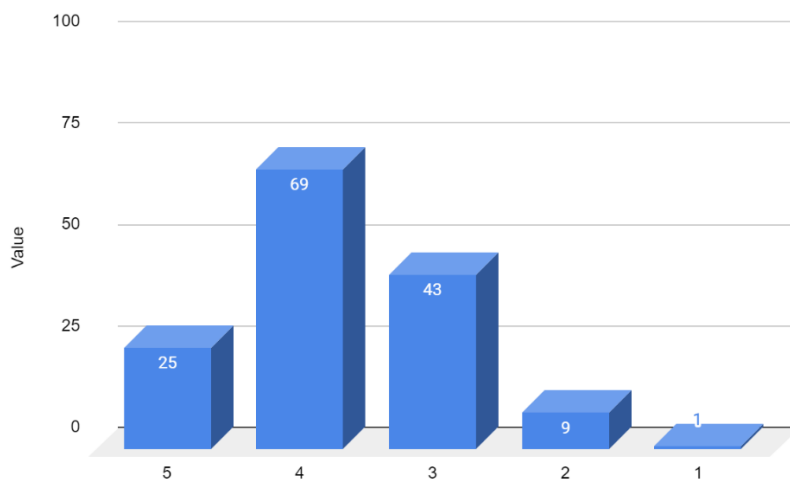
The data was supportive of the fact that 83.1% of the respondents said they would visit the park again whiles the remaining 16.9% said they would not.

Graphic 4.2: Ranking the Ria Formosa as one of the Top Tourist site in Portugal



Respondents were asked if they perceived the Ria Formosa Park as one of the Top Tourist sites in Portugal, the majority of respondent opted for a yes answer with 85% of total number against 15% against that idea. In conclusion, respondents of Ria Formosa see the Park as one of the Top tourist sites in Portugal.

Graphic 4.3- Respondents level of satisfaction



Respondents were also asked to describe their level of satisfaction on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from very dissatisfied (1) to very satisfied (5). The bar chart in figure 4.3 shows that 69 of the total respondents (49.6%) are satisfied with their visit, 43 of the total respondents

(29.3%) are neutral .25 respondents representing (17%) are very satisfied with the Park and finally 10 respondents are not in alignment with the total respondents.

Based on figure 4.2, most respondents seem to rank the park as one of the top tourist sites in Portugal (85%). To determine if the gender of respondents could affect their decision making in appreciation of the park, we analysed how related they can be. However, there is no significant evidence ($\chi^2=2.825$; $p>0.01$) and ($U=1938$; $p>0.01$). In other words we do not reject the null hypothesis

Nationality and level of satisfaction are significant and have a strong positive relationship between them ($\rho =.177$; $p<0.05$).

Factors that drive customer satisfaction ($\chi^2=662.643$; $p<.01$), Perceptions of Tourists towards ecotourism ($\chi^2=533.751$; $p<.01$), Environmental concerns ($\chi^2=463.037$; $p <.01$), are significantly dependent on the Degree of Knowledge respondents have towards the Park.

There is a significant relationship between age, educational status and respondents view ($U =166.500$; $p=0.04<.01$), In addition, educational status ($r=288$; $p<.01$) and age ($r=223$; $p<.01$) have a strong positive relation on respondents' view. This result is in a perfect correlation with respondent point of view (table 4.6) representing that ecotourism it is a natural place for nature observation while providing economic opportunities such as revenue (82.9%).

To further understand the relationship between the knowledge of respondents prior to their visit to the park and satisfaction, we analyzed the extent to which knowledge of ecotourism can have an impact on respondent ($H=13.544$; $p<.05$). The result shows a significant relationship between knowledge of ecotourism and satisfaction. This can be further explained as knowledge being a driver of satisfaction as seen in this study. This became very logical in the sense that the respondent's knowledge gives them an idea of what they want to enjoy when engage in ecotourism activity.

Respondents' willingness to revisit the park ($\rho =.235$; $p<.01$), respondent satisfaction of the park ($\rho =.294$; $p<.01$), and recommendation of the park ($\rho =.337$; $p<.01$) are statistically significant to the respondent environmental concerns. In other words respondent environmental concerns have an impact about respondent feedback

Respondents' desire to revisit the park and their perceptions have a significant relationship ($U =1051.500$; $p=0.04<.01$). In addition, respondent desire to revisit the park and their perceptions of the park have a strong positive relationship ($r=.260$; $p<.01$).

Overall, respondents' degree of knowledge ($\rho = .259$; $p < .01$), perceptions towards the park ($\rho = .196$; $p < .05$), factors that drive satisfaction ($\rho = .290$; $p < .01$), environmental concerns ($\rho = .294$; $p < .01$) and nationality ($\rho = .177$; $p < .05$) have a significant relationship with respondent satisfaction with the park.

4.5- Degree of Knowledge of Respondents on Ecotourism

The study sought to determine the degree of knowledge of ecotourism among the selected respondents. A summary of the analysis has been tabulated below:

Table 4.8: Knowledge of Ecotourism scale items distributions (%)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am fully aware of what ecotourism is about	6.0	35.3	17.3	28.0	13.3
Ecotourism is something I do based on the knowledge I have	4.1	7.4	22.3	46.6	19.6
I will be able to explain ecotourism to any tourist I see	4.0	8.0	22.8	40.9	24.2
Ecotourism is about touring around nice places	4.7	8.7	27.5	37.6	21.5
Ecotourism was made to preserve wildlife	4.1	4.7	19.6	29.7	41.9
I talk about ecotourism to several people	4.8	8.2	22.6	39.0	25.3
I have an appreciable knowledge about ecotourism	4.0	6.7	20.1	42.3	26.8
Based on the knowledge I have about ecotourism I would say I am confident about it	4.0	5.4	24.2	42.3	24.2
I talk optimistically about ecotourism	3.3	4.7	28.7	46.0	17.3
Ecotourism deals with issues such as the beach, wildlife and nice surrounding	2.1	4.9	17.5	34.3	41.3

Source: Field Data, 2021.

The table above shows the degree of awareness of the respondents pertaining to ecotourism. From the table, it is evident that the respondents were of the view that ecotourism is about touring around nice places with 37.6%. Thus, the respondents perceive touring as a medium through which they would go to places. Respondents agreed with 46.6% that ecotourism is something they do on the knowledge they have. Again, the data also shows that the respondents saw ecotourism in an optimistic way which represent 46%. 41.9% respondent strongly agree with the fact that ecotourism was made to preserve wildlife. Again, the data was indicative of the fact that the respondents were of the opinion that ecotourism deals with issues such as the beach, wildlife and nice surrounding 41.3%. The data thus shows that the respondents have very low awareness of knowledge pertaining to what ecotourism is really about 35.9%. However, the respondents also see all forms of tourism to be the same in the sense that they view tourism to be a medium through which people have fun among themselves and see other parts of the world.

4.6: Factors that drive Tourists' Satisfaction in The Ecotourism Industry

The study further sought to determine the factors that drive tourists' satisfaction in the ecotourism industry. A summary of the results has been tabulated below:

Table 4.9: Factors That Drive Tourists' Satisfaction(%)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Quietness of the Surrounding		3.5	25	42.4	27.1
Exposure to rare animals/ increasing knowledge of wildlife	2.1	3.5	22.9	38.9	32.6
Cool nature of environment	2.7	4.8	23.3	42.5	26.7
Far from your home	2.8	4.2	33.6	32.2	27.3
Assorted number of animals	2.7	7.5	25.3	33.6	30.8
Presence of natural environment	2.1	8.4	28.7	34.3	26.6
Interacting with native people	2.1	6.9	32.4	38.6	20.0
Supporting economic benefits to local communities	3.4	6.8	45.9	24.0	19.9
Customer service at Tourist Site	2.0	8.8	29.1	42.6	17.6
Food served at site	5.0	38.8	10.1	32.4	13.7

Source: Field Data, 2021

Based on the data gathered from the field with respect to the factors that influence their decision to patronize ecotourism services, it was revealed that more often than not, the respondents were attracted by what existed within the tourist site rather than issues related to food and economic factors. For instance, it was revealed that the quietness of the surrounding plays a key role to their wanting to patronize the services of tourist center with 42.4% agreement. Again, the data revealed that Presence of natural environment is very key in determining whether they would patronize the tourist site or not with 34.3% agreement. The data was also indicative of the fact that the assorted number of criminals on the site is key to determining if they would be patronize the site 33.6%. The data thus supported literature assertions on the fact that the

respondents were more interested in the environment that comes with the tourism site rather than issues related to food alongside the area.

4.7: Perceptions of Tourists Towards Ecotourism

The study further sought to determine the perceptions of the respondents towards ecotourism. The data results have been summarized below:

Table 4.10: Perceptions of tourist (%)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Pre-visit information about the Park was easy to obtain	2.0	4.7	23.5	46.3	23.5
Useful directional road signs in the Park	2.7	4.7	30.4	43.9	18.2
Access to friendly, responsive Park staff	2.7	4.1	30.6	39.5	23.1
Able to enjoy nature in this Park	2.7	6.2	24.0	39.0	28.1
Interesting, guided walks/talks by rangers/others	2.1	5.5	26.2	44.8	21.4
Clean, well-presented toilet facilities	2.0	9.5	24.5	38.8	25.2
Not too many other visitors present	2.1	7.6	33.1	37.9	19.3
A broad range of activities available (e.g. walking, picnicking, bird watching)	2.7	6.8	23.1	45.6	21.8
Feeling safe in the Park	2.1	4.9	23.8	39.9	29.4

Source: Field Data, 2021

The data showed that pre-visit information about the park was easy to obtain (46.3%). Again, it was revealed that there were very useful directions to the park (43.9). The fact that they also enjoyed the nature of the park was also very key (39.0%). Most of the respondents also responded to the fact that they felt very safe in the park (39.9%).

4.8: The Environmental Concerns of Ecotourists Within the Ria Formosa Natural Park

In determining the environmental concerns of ecotourists within the Ria Formosa Natural Park, the respondents were given a set of items to respond to. The results of the data have been tabulated below:

Table 4.11: Environmental Concerns of Ecotourists Within the Ria Formosa Natural Park

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The nature of the environment at the park matters to me	3.3	5.3	11.3	56.7	23.3
If the environment is not welcoming enough, I will not patronize the park	4.0	4.7	22.1	45.0	24.2
My first point of assessment of the park is the nature of the environment	4.7	5.4	24.3	39.2	26.4
A hazardous environment is not good enough for a tourist center	3.4	7.4	28.4	31.1	29.7
Dangerous animal free environment is of priority to me	3.4	6.1	24.3	37.2	29.1
A clean environment is necessary to enhance satisfaction	2.1	5.6	20.8	41.0	30.6

Source: Field Data, 2021

In determining the environmental concerns of ecotourists within the Ria Formosa Natural Park, the data overwhelmingly showed that the respondents are very much concerned about the environment within Ria Formosa Natural Park. For instance, the data showed that the nature of the environment at the park matters to the visitors (56.7%). Again, the data shows that respondents' first point of assessment of the park is the nature of the environment (39.2%). The respondents also overwhelmingly revealed that dangerous animal free environment is of priority (37.2%). One of the respondents mentioned that:

“being at this park for some years now, my only issues has got to do with the rate at which some of the animals make some sounds, sometimes it scares you because you might think they are actually coming to get you but it is normal when you keep coming, at the first instance you may be worried but it is better with time”

Another respondent also asserted to the fact that:

“The nature of the environment here is not bad at all, it is okay and to me they are doing well. All animals are kept at a safe distance from us humans else then that will be a problem”

Furthermore, when asked about the environment concerns respondents are faced with and what do they think management should be concerned with, the evaluation of the responses suggest sanitation to be the most environmentally concerning issue the tourists are faced with. The respondents among others listed environmental littering coming from animal excreta, plastic waste and inadequate toilet facilities to be their pain points. To these they suggest that the park management should make available adequate toilet and appropriated waste disposal facilities

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This study investigated tourists' perceptions and attitudes towards ecotourism in the Ria Formosa Natural Park (Faro) by examining the differences in tourists' perceptions, knowledge, factors influencing their satisfaction, environmental concerns towards the park and satisfaction between tourists with different background characteristics, and also the influence of perceptions of ecotourism on the level of satisfaction with ecotourism. The demographic results show that most of the ecotourists interviewed are male (58.7%), respondents are highly educated (university degree) (43.6%), respondent are aged between 18 and 57 years old, with a mean age of 37.14 years. Regarding marital status, most of the respondents are married (40.9%) and a large proportion are single, with most of them having a child (56.7%). British (41.3%) are the most common nationality of tourists visiting the park, followed by Dutch and French.

Regarding the characteristics of tourists (Table 4.5), the results show that the majority of respondents (51.3%) were repeated visitors while (48.7%) visited the RFNP for the first time. The majority of respondents have been coming to the park regularly for 1 to 5 years (50.6%). Visitors who come to the park are not only attracted by the nature of the park (35.6%) but are most interested in bird watching (37.6%) and relaxation (26.8%). This coincides perfectly with the results of Costa (2015) regarding the main reason why people visit the park. The results also show that 83.1% of the respondents indicated that they would visit RFNP again in the future.

Regarding the overall satisfaction of the park (RFNP), the majority of respondents consider the park as one of the best tourist sites in Portugal (85%) compared to (15%). On a 5-point Likert scale, respondents indicated that they were satisfied (49.6%) and (17%) very satisfied with the park.

To further analyze the sample, we examined the relationship between the variables. The result shows that there is no relationship between gender and customer satisfaction, and that nationality is statistically significant to respondent satisfaction. Respondents' perceptions, factors affecting their satisfaction and their environment concern are dependent on their knowledge about ecotourism. Respondents' environmental concerns are statistically significant to respondent desire to return to the park. Respondents' overall perceptions, factors affecting

their satisfaction, environmental concerns, and their level of knowledge are significantly related to their satisfaction with the park.

Degree of knowledge of respondents on ecotourism knowledge

In this section, respondents were asked to state their degree of knowledge ecotourism on rating 5-Likert scale from 5 (agree strongly) to 1 (disagree strongly) for the ten statements regarding ecotourism.

The result of the study revealed that there is an average level of knowledge of respondents about ecotourism. It is evident that the respondents were of the view that ecotourism is about touring around nice places with 37.6%. Thus, the respondents perceive touring as a medium through which they would go to places. Respondents agreed with 46.6% that ecotourism is something they do on the knowledge they have. Again, the data also shows that the respondents saw ecotourism in an optimistic way which represent 46%. Almost half of the respondents (41.9%) strongly agree with the fact that ecotourism was made to preserve wildlife. Again, the data was indicative of the fact that the respondents were of the opinion that ecotourism deals with issues such as the beach, wildlife and nice surrounding 41.3%. The data thus shows that the respondents have very low awareness of knowledge pertaining to what ecotourism is really about 35.3%. However, the respondents also see all forms of tourism to be the same in the sense that they view tourism to be a medium through which people have fun among themselves and see other parts of the world. According to Lew (2019), there seems to be a general lack of knowledge about ecotourism, even in the travel industry and among ecotourism operators. Following this logic, Björk (1997) also reported that 39% of general tourists visiting a Finnish island could not answer the question “How would you describe ecotourism?” Seventeen percent said that ecotourism was a good thing, and 19% thought ecotourism was environmentally friendly.

Factors that derive tourists’ satisfaction in the ecotourism industry

From a 5-likert scale from 5 (agree strongly) to 1 (disagree strongly) respondent were asked to state the factors that drive their satisfaction in the ecotourism industry.

From the result gathered from the field with respect to the factors that influence their decision to patronize ecotourism services, it was revealed that more often than not, the respondents were attracted by what existed within the tourist site rather than issues related to food and economic factors. For instance, it was revealed that the quietness of the surrounding plays a key role to

their wanting to patronize the services of tourist center with 42.4% agreement. Again, the data revealed that presence of natural environment is very key in determining whether they would patronize the tourist site or not with 34.3% agreement. The data was also indicative of the fact that the assorted number of criminals on the site is key to determining if they would be patronizing the site 33.6%. The data thus supported literature assertions on the fact that the respondents were more interested in the environment that comes with the tourism site rather than issues related to food alongside the area.

Perceptions of tourists towards ecotourism

The study's findings revealed that pre-visit information about the park was easy to obtain (46.3%). Again, it was revealed that there were very useful directions to the park (43.9). The fact that they also enjoyed the nature of the park was also very important (39.0%). Most of the respondents also responded to the fact that they felt very safe in the park (39.9%). Tourists' perceptions toward a park is very crucial to determine their satisfaction and their willingness to return to that park. The perceived awareness of visitors plays a vital role in the growth of tourism and further assists in the management of natural resources and the protection of wild residents for successful tourism contributions (Moghavvemi et al. 2017; Wu et al. 2018; Bakhsh et al. 2019; Zheng et al. 2019). In this logic, it is crucial that the effective management and ecotourism development should take into consideration of the tourist perceptions, motivation, preferences in order to fulfil their satisfaction and experiences.

Environmental concerns of ecotourists within the Ria Formosa Natural Park in Faro

In determining the environmental concerns of ecotourists within the Ria Formosa Natural Park, the data overwhelmingly showed that the respondents are very much concerned about the environment within Ria Formosa Natural Park. For instance, the data showed that the nature of the environment at the park matters to the visitors (56.7%). Again, the data shows that respondents' first point of assessment of the park is the nature of the environment (39.2%). The respondents also overwhelmingly revealed that dangerous animal free environment is of priority (37.2%). The tourists of the RFNP were concerned about sanitary conditions, they suggested the implementation of adequate toilets and appropriate waste disposal. Environmental awareness, also known as eco-friendly attitude or environmental conviction, refers to a person's awareness of the importance of preserving the environment. People who are aware of the importance of conserving natural resources tend to behave responsibly towards the environment. When it comes to travel intentions, such people would probably prefer

ecotourism over other types of tourism. This is because ecotourism promotes sustainable development by eliminating the negative impacts of tourism on the environment. Similarly, Bartczak (2015) and Nicolas et al. (2017) expressed that individual frustration and environmental issues have a significant impact on people's willingness to pay to maintain and improve the care of natural parks and recreation areas. Therefore, neglecting individual perceptions of the recreation area may lead to biased results.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

This study provides useful managerial implications for management and contributes to the development of ecotourism in emerging markets. This study analyzes the respondents' perceptions and attitude towards RFNP. The main objective of the study was to investigate tourists' perceptions towards ecotourism management. Since the British are the nationality that visits the Park in a higher percentage, followed by French and Dutch nationalities, we can conclude that the British are looking for more than traditional tourism (sun and beach). The RFNP has an attractive climate with mild temperatures year-round, which is an advantage to attract international tourists from all over the world. Therefore, marketing efforts could be directed towards these countries.

Given that the mean age of our visitor sample is 37.14 years, this information may be crucial for the park manager to develop specific activities that are suitable for this age group. In fact, Yacob (2010) suggests that park managers or ecotourism operators should have an effective plan that focuses on a specific age group in order to maximize the use of their limited resources. For example, park managers or ecotourism operators could develop specific recreational activities that are appropriate for that age group, such as a combination of jungle trekking and rock climbing, etc.

Bird watching is the main reason for visiting the park. It is important that park managers develop a marketing strategy to promote rare and emblematic bird species. Ecotourists are satisfied with the park overall, they are willing to recommend the park to others and to visit it again. Respondents are mostly satisfied, but do not know exactly what ecotourism is about. Respondents indicated that they chose ecotourism rather than traditional tourism because they seek tranquillity, want to see rare animals, and are far from home.

A correlation was found between nationality and respondents' satisfaction with the park; therefore, special attention should be paid to the British market. Targeting the British market seems to be a good strategy. It could be more beneficial to promote the RFNP as a destination for bird watching in the British market than in other countries, since the British are already the main nationality of tourists in the Algarve. The main opinion of the respondents was that they would not visit the park if the environment was not inviting enough.

Respondents felt that the RFNP park managers should provide more adequate toilet facilities and also adequate waste disposal facilities. Tourist preferences and perceptions of environmental issues, such as in marine parks, can be a better basis for planning and management; thus, a management approach can be successful if dialog is encouraged between managers and stakeholders who support and share decisions (Tress and Tress, 2003). Yacob (2010) argued that if park managers want to incorporate public opinion in managing ecotourism resources, they must consider how tourists affect the resources and their use.

This study also recommends that public organizations should create greater awareness of the importance of environmental protection through education, propaganda, and the media, as this will encourage demand for ecotourism. Finally, this study advises tourism marketers to develop marketing materials that emphasize the future perspective and images of eco-destinations if they want to promote ecotourism. Blogs can include content such as: Worth seeing with beautiful images of the natural beauty of ecotourism destinations, Worth eating with a discussion of the long-term benefits of organic food offered at ecotourism sites, and the reason for visiting Eco destinations, such as showing the long-term benefits of protecting the natural environment of tourism destinations.

This study has some limitations that may be an opportunity for further research. The major limitation is the sample size, the period time of collecting the data during the Covid pandemic period, the fact that the questionnaire was distributed only online and also the used of non-random sample, so this conclusion cannot be extrapolated to the entire population of visitors of the RFNP. Therefore, the results are only valid for this sample.

Additionally, more robust causal inferences could be drawn by testing models with longitudinal data. This is particularly important for studies such as the effect of leadership style on job performance. In addition, the study relied only on quantitative data collection and an analytic approach without incorporating qualitative techniques that provide a more detailed and comprehensive perspective in studies such as this one. Future studies should therefore consider a mixed-methods approach that integrates both methods to make studies of this type more detailed and comprehensive, thus giving the study a holistic view.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire on Perceptions and Attitudes of Tourist towards Ecotourism in the Ria Formosa Natural Park (Faro)

Dear Sir/Madam,

This survey is part of my dissertation at the Universidade do Algarve. Toward partial fulfilment of the requirements for *MSC degree in management studies*, this interview guide aims at collecting data on the topic; *“Perceptions and attitudes of tourists towards eco-tourism in the Ria Formosa Natural Park (Faro)”*. Please, be assured that any information provided will be treated with the confidentiality it deserves and will be used purely for academic purposes. I would appreciate your effort greatly if you could answer the following questions for the above-mentioned purpose. It will take a few minutes for you to complete this survey.

These are few questions to describe you. Kindly tick the appropriate response space which best describes you.

SECTION A:

1: The degree of knowledge of respondents on ecotourism.

For each of the following statements, please tick the appropriate answer using the keys bellow, where:

KEY: 1 = Strongly Disagree 2 =Disagree 3 =Neutral 4 =Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

1	I am fully aware of what ecotourism is about	1 2 3 4 5
2	Ecotourism is something I do based on the knowledge I have	1 2 3 4 5
3	I will be able to explain ecotourism to any tourist I see	1 2 3 4 5

4	Ecotourism is about touring around nice places	1 2 3 4 5
5	Ecotourism was made to preserve wildlife	1 2 3 4 5
6	I talk about ecotourism to several people	1 2 3 4 5
7	I have an appreciable knowledge about ecotourism	1 2 3 4 5
8	Based on the knowledge I have about ecotourism I would say I am confident about it	1 2 3 4 5
9	I talk optimistically about ecotourism	1 2 3 4 5
10	Ecotourism deals with issues such as the beach, wildlife and nice surrounding	1 2 3 4 5

2: Factors that drive tourists' satisfaction in the ecotourism industry

Rank the following factors from 1st to 5th according to what drives your satisfaction as a tourist in the Ecotourism Industry: where 1 is the lowest value/satisfaction and 5 is the highest value/satisfaction.

1	Quietness of the Surrounding	1 2 3 4 5
2	Exposure to rare animals/ increasing knowledge of wildlife	1 2 3 4 5
3	Cool nature of environment	1 2 3 4 5
4	Far from your home	1 2 3 4 5
5	Assorted number of animals	1 2 3 4 5
6	Presence of natural environment	1 2 3 4 5
7	Interacting with native people	1 2 3 4 5
8	Supporting economic benefits to local communities	1 2 3 4 5
9	Customer service at Tourist Site	1 2 3 4 5
10	Food served at site	1 2 3 4 5

3: Perception of tourists towards ecotourism in the Ria Formosa Natural Park, located in the Algarve

For each of the questions tick the appropriate answer using the keys bellow, where:

KEY: 1 =Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 =Neutral 4 =Agree 5 =Strongly Agree

1	Pre-visit information about the Park was easy to obtain	1 2 3 4 5
2	Useful directional road signs in the Park	1 2 3 4 5
3	Access to friendly, responsive Park staff	1 2 3 4 5
4	Able to enjoy nature in this Park	1 2 3 4 5
5	Interesting guided walks/talks by rangers/others	1 2 3 4 5
6	Clean, well-presented toilet facilities	1 2 3 4 5
7	Not too many other visitors present	1 2 3 4 5
8	A broad range of activities available (e.g. walking, picnicking, bird watching)	1 2 3 4 5
9	Feeling safe in the Park	1 2 3 4 5

In your view, how do you see the Ria Formosa Natural Park, Located in The Algarve?

- It is a natural place to connect with nature
- It is an economic opportunity that provide revenue
- It is a natural place for nature observation while providing economic opportunities such as revenue realization

When you hear about the Ria Formosa Natural Park what are the thoughts that come to mind?

- Bird watching
- Relaxation
- Nature walk
- Other. Please specify.

Would you rank the Ria Formosa Natural Park as one of the top tourist sites in Portugal?

- Yes
- No

If your answer is yes to the above question, kindly rank your observation where 1>2>3>4>5

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

4: The environmental concerns of ecotourists within the Ria Formosa Natural Park in Faro

For each of the questions tick the appropriate answer using the keys bellow, where:

KEY: 1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

1	The nature of the environment at the park matters to me	1 2 3 4 5
2	If the environment is not welcoming enough, I will not patronize the park	1 2 3 4 5
3	My first point of assessment of the park is the nature of the environment	1 2 3 4 5
4	A hazardous environment is not good enough for a tourist center	1 2 3 4 5
5	Dangerous animal free environment is of priority to me	1 2 3 4 5
6	A clean environment is necessary to enhance satisfaction	1 2 3 4 5

Having been a tourist at the Ria Formosa Natural Park in Faro, what are the environmental issues that you are faced with?

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What are the key issues pertaining to environmental concerns that you think management of Ria Formosa Natural Park in Faro should be concerned with?

.....

.....

If you have observed environmental problems, can you give us your opinion on which of the following services when implemented will help reduce the environmental problems?

- Provisioning of clearly marked entries
- Provisioning of visitor's centers
- Provisioning of visitor's services
- Provisioning of hiking trails
- Provisioning of clean toilets and/or garbage bins

Would you recommend this park to like-minded friends?

- Yes
- No

Would you be willing to return to this park?

- Yes
- No

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

- 1) Gender:
a. Female [] b. Male []
- 2) Age (in years): _____

3). Nationality:

4) Marital Status:

a. Married /living together b. Single c. Divorced /separated e. Widowed

5) Number of children: _____

6) What is your highest completed level of education?

- Elementary
- Secondary
- Professional (college/technical school)
- Higher (university)

7). Is today your first visit to the Ria Formosa Natural Park?

- Yes
- No

8). If no, for how many years have you been a tourist at the Ria Formosa Natural Park

less than 1 b. 1-5 c. 6-10 d. 11 and above

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND PARTICIPATION!